9. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PARTY: THE MEANING OF THE ANNUAL GATHERINGS OF THE PARTY - THE *PARTEITAGE*

At the Reichsparteitag of 1926 Hitler said:

"I was always particularly anxious to secure that *Parteitage* should on principle never be used for the settlement of personal disputes. Such disputes must certainly be settled in one way or another, but just as certainly the *Parteitag,* which once in the year should unite the whole Movement, is not the fitting day for such a settlement. Neither is it the place at which to seek to clarify unripe and uncertain ideas. Neither the length of time available at such a gathering nor its nature admit of giving to it the character of a Council. And it must never be forgotten that in all such cases or those similar to them great decisions have not been made at such Councils: on the contrary, for the most part, world-history pursues its course without paying any attention to them. World-history, like all events of historical significance, is the result of the activity of single individuals — it is not the fruit of majority decisions."

In his Proclamation read at the Nuremberg Parteitag of 1933 Hitler said:

The line which separated the National Socialists from the *bourgeois* parties was their clear recognition of the conditions necessary for a successful attack upon Marxism and their consequent action. They recognized that "a power which is resolved to kill the spirit through terrorism cannot be broken so long as one persists in the pious resolution to use only the weapons of the spirit.

The use of weapons of the spirit in a fight has a meaning only so long as all sections of the people are prepared to submit themselves to the results of a struggle waged in this manner. But so soon as Marxism hurled amongst the masses its watchword, 'If thou wilt not my brother be, then I will smash thy skull for thee', a right of the fist was declared which the spirit must either attack with the same weapons or lose its influence and become historically of no moment. It is a fallacy to believe that party-formations which for decades have fought with more or less ineffective weapons of the spirit can suddenly achieve heroic action. That is also the reason why with old and outworn organizations one can never hope that a new leadership would be able by their means to effect quite different actions. On the contrary every attempt to give to the *bourgeois* parties a leadership which is foreign to their nature can lead only to disunion between the leaders and the members. The conflict with Marxism therefore from the beginning demanded the creation of an organization which was, in its whole character, trained precisely for this battle and was therefore adapted to it. And that took time."

In National Socialism such an organization was created and "the essential precondition for every later real success was the fanatical faith in the victory of the Movement.... Our Mass-Gatherings did not serve merely to gain for us new supporters but — what was more important — they served to fortify and give moral strength to those who were already won.... The objects of the National Socialist *Parteitage* were:

(i) To give to the Leader of the Movement the opportunity to come once more into personal relations with other leaders.

(ii) To unite the members of the Party afresh with their leaders.

(iii) To strengthen all alike in the confident expectation of victory, and psychologically

(iv) To inspire the great impulses of the spirit in their determination to pursue the struggle." . . .

That struggle had been at length crowned with success; the miracle had happened in Germany: "the state of treachery and perjury had been overcome and in its place had been restored a Reich of honor and loyalty and decency." . . . "The National Socialist Movement has become the German Reich, the German State." . . . "At the beginning of this year (1933) there were weeks when we were but a hair's breadth from Bolshevist chaos": National Socialism has done for Germany what Fascism did for Italy. . . .

Speaking at Weimar on 3 July 1,036, *at the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Parteitag held in that city, Hitler said:*

"It was the external compulsion exercised by the law governing associations which led the NSDAP. in the first instance to hold its *Parteitage.* The legal regulations demanded every year the holding of a so-called 'General Meeting of Members'. There was the further fact that the proceeding laid down by law for 'the election of fresh officers' used to occupy at most ten minutes in the case of the NSDAP., whose leadership, as is well known, had never been a problem. The idea of allowing this formal occasion of the gathering of delegates from the whole Reich to become at the same time a demonstration which should serve to strengthen the movement was the beginning of the conception of a *Parteitag* of the NSDAP."

"Since the Bavarian Government of that day had seen fit, for reasons after all not difficult to understand,

to forbid me to make speeches, only the 'General Meeting of Members — since no speeches were usually made at it —could be held in Munich in order to conform with the formalities prescribed by law. The *Parteitag* itself, however, we had to remove elsewhere and the dispensation of fate led us then to Weimar, in Thuringia, which was one of the few States in which at that time I was allowed to speak in public. So we came to this city, and here for the first time we were able to develop the type of the new *Parteitag,* which was now completely freed from the last democratic fetter which the Law of Associations imposed."

The Leader went on to describe the internal reasons of organization which led to the division of the Parteitag *into the Delegates' Congress and the Special Sessions. At the Congress, before chosen comrades and guests, the results of the campaign of the National Socialist Movement and the results of National Socialist research in every sphere of life were presented.* "The plan was that an account should be given not only of what had been achieved, but also of what we had gained by our experience. Further, that the general lines of policy should be laid down which were to guide the future campaign of the coming year. That we freed this statement of the general lines of our policy and this rendering of account of the intellectual work of the Movement from all corrosive discussion, that we freed it, in particular, from any decision depending on a vote—all this led to an unexampled encouragement of those who took part in these demonstrations. All those comrades who once in the year came from their little towns to attend a *Reichsparteitag* were not filled with the doubts and uncertainties which might have arisen from listening to the objections of an opposition, to discussions and so on; on the contrary, they turned homewards filled with a new, blind trust and a new and unprecedented confidence."

"When the small man comes, perhaps only once in his life, from his home circle, from his village, from his small market town, to this intellectual center of the Movement, he has no wish to listen to bickerings between individual leaders, who neither can nor will come to an understanding: rather, during these days he wishes to draw fresh encouragement for his hard struggle in the world outside.! He wishes to carry away with him the conviction 'My leaders know what they want! For if they do not know what they want, how am I to know, how could I give my decision?' "

"The object of the Special Sessions is to deal with certain problems of a purely material kind. Here, too, the ruling principle is: Never must a resolution be passed by a majority decision! Never! The official in charge of the Special Session listens to the various expressions of opinion, and then on his side gives his decision. He announces: 'I now close the discussion: I have formed a picture and I will now suggest to the Leader that this or that should be done.' For if specialists cannot agree on any problem, and the majority alone is to determine the point, the question arises: Who is to bear the responsibility for that decision if the step which has been decided upon should afterwards prove mistaken and the defeated party be shown to have been in the right? That responsibility must always be undertaken by a single man. There is no decision possible for which one man does not assume responsibility. That is the ruling principle of our Movement. It is the principle of an old Germanic democracy which knows no responsibility which goes downwards while authority goes upwards, but which knows only an authority which proceeds downwards from the top and a responsibility which proceeds upwards from the bottom. And the highest point in this hierarchy of responsibility recognizes in its turn as *its* supreme instance the authority of the German people as a whole to whose service we all feel ourselves pledged and to which we are responsible."

"On matters which are clear there is no need for a vote. Therefore one needs to vote only on matters which are not clear. There are matters which often create difficulties even for the intellectual *(geistige)* leadership of a

Movement and on which in consequence there are doubts or different views. These are the questions therefore which should be put to the vote. Who then should vote on such an issue? The masses of the comrades ? But that would mean that the politician surrenders altogether the intellectual leadership of the Party, for in such a case the mass must logically be the leaders. But who then bears the true responsibility for the decision? Do you think it possible that anyone with a real personality would be content to assume a responsibility which was imposed *(aufoktroyiert)* upon him by any majority? You may object that the *bourgeois* world and Marxism have in fact acted in this way. True, but we have ourselves experienced also the heroic issue of these experiments. They have indeed carried out the orders which they received from the masses, but for those orders they have never had the courage to accept the responsibility. And that is comprehensible: an anonymous majority, which the lack of character in our past history avowedly turned into a so-called secret majority, one cannot make responsible. How should these millions with their secret decision — made, if possible, with sealed voting-papers dropped into the urn — how should they bear the responsibility? Consider the immorality *(die Unmoral)* of this principle. Here men who take their stand as leaders assume a responsibility in their own name which they receive, imposed upon them, from men who have not even the courage to say openly either Yes or No. How can a man of any character, for example, undertake responsibility for a vital decision — for a decision which may determine the existence or non-existence of a nation — when that decision is forced upon him by an anonymous majority? In that case he would have to defend a policy with authority of his own name, while thousands or hundreds of thousands, perhaps, it may be, millions, without giving their names, place this one man under the obligation to do that for which they are totally unable to accept responsibility. That is impossible! That leads to cowardice, to the loss of all sense of the meaning of responsibility! The leadership of a people cannot be merely the executive organ — the leaders must lead!"

"If no one is prepared to undertake responsibility, the result must be the annihilation of all authority, it must be destructive of the whole value of human personality. And if someone objects, 'Yes, but you, too, permit voting.' True, but never on questions of detail, only on really large questions—on tasks which can be clearly visualized by the whole German people. And that means that if I take a step on behalf of the German people for the restoration of its honor or its freedom, then I expect that the German people will grasp the significance of that step and that it will support me. Even in such a case I will not say, 'I should like to take this step, but first I must be protected: there must be a vote and only if the voting is in my favor, then I will venture to take the step.' No! That a truly National Socialist leadership will never do. A National Socialist leader will make his decision and then afterwards, if need be, he will declare: 'People, we have made this decision conscientiously and on the best information we could get. Please, now, give your judgment!' And we know then quite well what the judgment of the people will be. That is to say, the more one appeals to the people through elections to give their judgment only on questions of the greatest import and those which move it to the depths — the more surely a people is conscious that it really has at its head a resolute leadership — the more decisively will it support that leadership."

"But still it may be objected: 'Anyhow that is after all a Government without a people.' No! That would be so if an individual man should have the presumption to put himself at the head of the nation and to declare: 'I rule.' Then one could justifiably say, 'Why do you rule? and by what right? Anybody could come and make the same declaration.' No! The Party stands as a living organism of the people behind this leadership. The Party is the people. The Party is the organization of the political leadership of the people, and, further, the Party is, precisely as is everything in life, the result of a process of selection. In it are concentrated all those who from amongst the people are naturally qualified for political life, all those who in any way have the inner conviction that they must perforce devote themselves to politics. The Party is a body of picked men. It represents in its constitution a selection from the people of its political elements. Thus the Party is the leadership and in fact the legislature. The State is the administration and it has the duty of acting as the executive. The Party as an organization of picked men thus fulfills all the conditions necessary for a Government closely bound up with the people, for the whole personnel which determines the action of the State and of the Reich runs from base to summit through this Movement. It is constructed from a process of continuous selection, and this selection begins in the smallest unit, in the cell, in the local group *(Ortsgruppe)."*

"If ever it could be maintained of a Movement that it was not built on a single personality, then that is true of our Movement. At the moment at which we banished for ever from our midst the democratic poison of perpetual disunion and intrigue there came to our leadership this stability, this internal security. And if ever any element failed to adapt itself to this order of ours, as you well know, it was rejected. Thus there arose this wonderful, indestructible community between the highest leader, his collaborators, and the body of their followers. We can never dispense with this leadership; this it is which guarantees to the Party its perpetuity. Through the selection of its body of

leaders the Party will in the future be able to appoint the men needed for the execution of all the tasks set them by the nation and only in this way can there be built up a leadership of the people which shall be really hard, truly capable for all its duties, a leadership ripened by experience."

"If the principle of so-called 'public discussion' could in fact remove abuses, then we ought to be living in a Paradise, for never was there more discussion than in our parliamentary period. But all this talk produced not improvement, but only an increase in confusion, insecurity, and ineffectiveness. It was on these methods that our whole *bourgeois* Marxist-democratic parliamentary life was built up. Only for this reason were we able to destroy it, to smash it into pieces and to extinguish it from our history. It had to be destroyed because a clearer, far truer organization had arisen which could be set in its place. And thus it was no wonder that from the very day when this movement was founded I could be convinced that this Party *must* win Germany to its side. It is through no chance that we came to power: we came to power through an irony law of natural necessity."

In a speech at the Harvest Thanksgiving on the Bückerberg (3 October 1937) Hitler said that the miracle of the National Socialist Revolution was a miracle of reason — "namely, that the German people has become so reasonable and has once more learned to think.... Our great demonstrations which we hold in Germany are always only celebrations *(Tagungen)* at which we must endeavor to bring our people to think reasonably."

In the Proclamation read at the opening of the Parteitag *in September 1937 Hitler said:*

The annual *Parteitag* at Nuremberg has become "the Great Community-Festival of the Nation". "Ten years ago this assembly might have been rightly called the Revolutionary Congress of a Party which was seeking to capture a State by storm: to-day it is the great review of the army of the German nation—a nation won by National Socialism."

Since the early days of the Movement there were three purposes which the general assemblies at the *Parteitag* had to fulfill:

(i) The statement of what had been achieved through the activity and work of the Movement, what had been already effectively planned; in a word, how far the aims of the Movement had been realized.

(ii) The proclamation of the tasks and therefore of the work to be accomplished both in the near and more distant future.

(iii) The education of those comrades, both men and women, who at these *Parteitage* showed themselves specially enthusiastic, the aim being to initiate them and through them the whole people into the spirit of those principles of the Movement which determined its tenets and organization.

Hitler then proceeded to explain that it was essential that these great annual gatherings should take place in the same city each year, since only thus could there be created, in the course of time, buildings adequate to receive the great masses of the assembled people. The preparation of Nuremberg as the *Parteitag* city might take decades. It was now realized that the choice of Nuremberg for these meetings was completely justified: "in no other city could even future generations establish that magical association of the heritage of a past of unexampled richness with the clear evidences of a glorious present and of a future which were no less unique."

"In a single section — in the coming into being of the new Nuremberg — one may recognize the growth of our Movement, the development of Germany. A gigantic forum is being constructed: the spaces for our parades are the greatest in the world. Tomorrow there is to be laid the foundation stone of a Stadium such as the world has never seen. In two years at least the structure of the colossus of our Congress Hall will stand completed and as our first granite monument will bear witness to the greatness of the idea which inspired it and bear witness also to the greatness of the whole layout of the new city."

In his speech to members of the Party at the Nuremberg Parteitag on IS September 1936 Hitler said: "Do we not feel once again in this hour the miracle that brought us together? Once you heard the voice of a man, and it struck deep into your hearts; it awakened you, and you followed this voice. Year after year you went after it, though him who had spoken you never even saw. You heard only a voice, and you followed it. When we meet each other here,

the wonder of our coming thus together fills us all. Not everyone of you sees me, and I do not see everyone of you. But I feel you, and you feel me!"

"It is the belief in our people that has made us small men great, that has made us poor men rich, that has made brave and courageous men out of us wavering, spiritless, timid folk; this belief made us see our road when we were astray; it joined us together into one whole!"

"So on one day you all come into this city, leaving your small villages, your market-towns, your cities, leaving your mines, your factories, and your ploughs. You come, that from the small world that surrounds your daily fight for existence, and your fight for Germany and for our people you may, once in a while, gain the feeling that now we are together; we are with him and he with us, and we are now Germany! . . . Never in these long years have we offered any other prayer but this: Lord, grant to our people peace at home, and grant and preserve to them peace from the foreign foe! We in our generation have lived through so much fighting that it is natural that we should long for peace. We wish to work, we wish to mold our Reich, to organize it after our own fashion, not after that of the Bolshevist Jews!"

"We wish to care and to work for the future of the children of our people; we wish not only to make their life one day secure, but to make it easier. The past for us has been so burdensome that of the mercy and goodness of Providence we can ask only one thing: Spare our children what we have had to endure! . . . Through the hard schooling of the struggle, Fate in its grace gave to us men selected and chosen; that which Fate gave us we would guard for the future through our own rigorous selection. To be a National Socialist is to be a man, to be a fighter; it is to be brave and courageous and capable of sacrifice. That, too, we are for all time!"

". . . And as a prophet I can say to you: This Reich has lived through only the first days of its youth. It will grow on into the centuries, it will become strong and mighty. These banners shall be borne through the ages by ever new generations of our people. Germany has found herself! Our people is born again!"